

# Kyodan

## News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN  
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### PREPARATIONS BEGIN FOR FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

With the smoke not yet settled after the 16th Extraordinary General Assembly of the Kyodan, held in November, 1969, in which a group of seminary students, young pastors and laymen took over proceedings, plans are going ahead for the 17th Regular General Assembly, to be held in Tokyo October 27-30.

High on the list of agenda items will be a bill to consolidate into one the two orders for Kyodan ministers by a revision of Article 9 of the Kyodan Constitution. Article 9 now reads:

Ministers of this United Church are dedicated persons who have been called of God and have gone through the regular procedures established by this United Church.

Ministers are classified as seikyōshi (ordained ministers) and hokyōshi (licentiates).

A seikyōshi is one who has received ordination; a hokyōshi is one who has received a license to preach. (After two years of pastoral experience, passing an ordination examination administered by the Committee on Ministerial Training and Qualifications, and upon approval of the Committee's recommendation by the candidate's district assembly, he is then qualified to be ordained.)

The new bill to be considered would make the graduates of the six-year seminary course (four years of undergraduate and two years of graduate study) eligible for ordination upon graduation. Graduates of Bible schools and colleges would be eligible to take the ordination examination after two years' pastoral experience.

General Secretary Toru Takakura said that the Committee had investigated the matter of two orders. While it was apparently necessary to make this provision at the time of the formation of the United Church in 1941 because of the wide range of standards of practice represented by the 30 denominations which united to form the United Church at that time, it now appears strange, in the Protestant tradition, to make such a distinction, the Committee said.

The coming General Assembly will be the **first** one constituted following the restructuring of the Kyodan General Assembly, which provided for the election of General Assembly delegates from among district assembly delegates rather than from the entire lay and clergy membership of a district. It is anticipated that this will result in stronger ties between the district and the General Assembly of the Kyodan, as the Assembly delegates will bring to the biennial Assembly the concerns of their districts and provide a channel through which General Assembly decisions can be reflected back to the district bodies.







May 20, 1970

## NEW AVENUES OF EXCHANGE EXPLORED

"City problems have an international character," Rev. Nicholas M. Iyoya told Kyodan staff members when he met with them recently to report on his two-month tour of Christian work in Japan, particularly with an eye to urban and industrial evangelism.

Iyoya came to Japan in connection with the work of J-SAC--the Joint Strategy and Action Commission, a cooperative agency of five denominations in North California that are cooperating in tackling urban problems such as minority groups, schools, sanitation, public nuisances, etc.

Iyoya's visit to Japan took him to Kitakyushu, where activities for the Korean minorities are one concern, to Chiba, to see the Center developed under Rev. Minoru Ishimaru's direction, and to the Kansai, where he found "many important things taking place" in pioneer evangelism and labor union education. The problems of minorities, public nuisances and education, which concern the California churches are, Iyoya found, also concerns in Japan, although in differing degrees from region to region.

Evaluating what he saw in his travels, Iyoya said that he found the scholastic level of laymen and pastors very high. But he also felt that some projects were too largely individual efforts, too little organized for mutual support, cooperation and exchange of experience. He sees the need for more cooperation in dealing with local problems, in addition to the larger efforts with regard to Security, China, peace, and Yasukuni.

Iyoya was positive about the importance of cooperation both in terms of organization and information flow. Acknowledging that local coordination and interpretation is a district matter, he laid on the Kyodan staff responsibility for encouraging such developments.

Fluent in Japanese, Iyoya, a Nisei, was able both to plumb fully the situations he saw against the background of his own experiences, including his work as pastor of the Christ United Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, and to discuss his composite views with staff members.

A new venture in mission cooperation for the Kyodan, Iyoya's visit aroused hopes that further exchanges of this kind can be made among persons in parallel types of work. Iyoya's itinerary was planned by Kazuyo Kishimoto, secretary of the Research Institute on Mission of the Kyodan. J-SAC hopes to send several such visitors to Japan each year.

## THE YASUKUNI BILL AND ONE MAN'S RESPONSE

At 4:50 p.m. of the afternoon of Wednesday, May 13, the phone rang in the office of Masahiro Tomura, secretary of the Kyodan's Committee on Social Concerns. The excitement that Tomura felt as he answered showed the importance of the call. From the Diet, now in the last minutes of the closing session, a member of the House of Representative was calling. "The Yasukuni Bill is holed up in the Cabinet committee. It will not be carried over to the next session," he said.

Tomura felt a surge of relief. While no one, least of all Tomura, believes that this means the issue is closed, it does mean that the bill will have to be reintroduced into the next session, and it gives additional time to encourage wider study and action in regard to the bill.



For the past three years, but particularly since the Yasukuni Nationalization Bill was introduced into the current Diet session last June 30, Tomura has devoted a major part of his time to studying, explaining, urging people to take a position on, the bill. So persuasive and persistent are his efforts that he has been dubbed, by one editor friend, the "demon" of Yasukuni, by other friends, "Mr. Yasukuni."

On the wall of his office hang colorful slogan posters, "Does the Prime Minister decide who is God? Nonsense!" Shelves are lined with pamphlets discussing Yasukuni and other "1970 problems." Every few days Tomura turns out another issue of Yasukuni Kinkyu News, a mimeographed sheet bringing up to date Yasukuni developments, which Tomura often hand prints while telephoning or talking to a visitor. And there is a rapidly disappearing pile of copies of the new 492-page book of basic documents on the Yasukuni Shrine issue, collected and edited by Tomura and published by the Protestant Publishing Co. The corridors leading to the office are often lined with trappings for marches, public meetings, appeals--white banners, signs, bullhorns.

In addition to being secretary of the Committee on Social Concerns, Tomura is secretary of the NCC Special Committee on the Yasukuni Problem and of the Liaison Committee to Oppose the Yasukuni Shrine Bill, composed of representatives from a wide range of religious groups which are opposed to nationalization.

#### Why Yasukuni Is Important

Reminded by a foreign reporter that people outside Japan tend to feel that "it is natural for a country to want to honor its war dead" and to feel that Japanese Christians may overemphasize the issue, Tomura put his finger on what he feels are the two crucial points:

"The most important issue in the Yasukuni bill is the mixture of politics and religion, a result of the fact that the Japanese people have no clear idea of one, unique God. We Japanese have many, in fact millions, of gods, and a very loose idea of 'personality' and 'God.'"

"It is the traditional mixture of religion and politics that led this country into war before. We had a very painful experience during the 100 years since the Meiji Restoration, and this is the lesson we learned. When politicians mix religion and politics, it is very easy to lead a nation into war. By this bill, the government is trying to do the same thing again. The whole atmosphere of liberal thinking will be suppressed. It will become easy to militarize the country again."

"The second point," he said, "is that the first article of the bill says that people should 'give thanks to the war dead and praise their deeds.' This bill would compel people to praise their deeds rather than give them the freedom to praise them or not praise them. It is by such means as this that the government gets hold of the minds of people. It puts basic human freedom in a very precarious position."

#### An Industrial Evangelist at Heart

Although Tomura's time has been occupied in recent months largely with such problems as Yasukuni, Security, and Okinawa, his basic concern is industrial evangelism. Or, as he prefers to put it, "My speciality is Old Testament. Industrial evangelism is one of my ways of witnessing."



Tomura was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1923, of Buddhist parents. He adds, "My mother was a pious Buddhist, my father a materialist." He attended school in his home town. He feels as a boy there was some "germ" of social concern but, he explains, it was the period of Japan's increasing militarism, and there was little opportunity to explore social questions. He was aware dimly of voices of social protest.

He was baptized at the local Methodist Church while in middle school and entered the English Literature Department of Meiji Gakuin, but left it to join the Army. He was in infantry training in Indonesia when the war ended. "It was only by accident that I was not a war criminal," he observes.

When Tomura returned to Japan from Indonesia, he worked for three years as a day laborer in Yamaguchi. Encouraged by his local pastor, he entered Tokyo Union Seminary, where he majored in Old Testament, writing his thesis on Isaiah 53. After seven years as a pioneer pastor in a Hokkaido mining town, he studied at Lancaster Theological Seminary in 1960-61, and in the ministers-in-industry program at the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1961-62.

Tomura admits that both Yasukuni and Okinawa were at first merely responsibilities that came with the job of being secretary of the Committee on Social Concerns but that as he studied them he came to realize their importance. Yasukuni is critical in the realm of religion-state relations, he feels. Okinawa made him aware of how little he, as a Japanese, knew about the history and problems of that part of Japan. But Okinawa also inspired him by the outstanding example of its peace movement, which is made up not of professional peace people but of the people themselves who have been struggling for more than twenty year to gain their own human rights.

Tomura is like the tiny new transistor--small in size, quiet in unobtrusive manner, and highly efficient. Yet he also is a very human person, who combines a sense of humor that frequently bubbles forth in laughter, with a love of traditional Japanese culture and arts. As a pioneer pastor, he is said to have walked through the town playing a flute to announce his services. In meetings, which he often would prefer not to attend, he frequently passes the time writing poetry or songs, which quietly circulate around the room. His hobby, he says, is learning to read a little in many different languages, although he is already competent in both English and German.

"My mother nurtured me in a religious atmosphere and gave my life its religious impetus," he says. "I myself groped, found the entrance at the church and, in reading the Bible, sought and found what I was searching for. Isaiah 53, on which I wrote my seminary thesis, forms the background of my thought and continues to be the source of my thinking."

Not a man to depend upon another man's thinking, Tomura feels he must develop his own thought, based on his particular situation and his study of the Bible. In September, the Kyodan will publish a book of his thought as it has developed over his "first twenty years," strongly reflecting the image of the "suffering servant."

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On the back page of this issue, we begin a new feature--a brief listing of past and future events in various areas of Kyodan church life. Please let us know if you wish more information.

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what has been --- IN THE KYODAN --- what is to be

### Coming:

Heads of church kindergartens to meet in Karuizawa June 2-4 (Shimpo 5/23)  
Kansai Rural Center to hold meeting for pastors' wives of 5 Kansai districts  
June 8-9 (Shimpo 5/23)  
Consultation on pioneer evangelism to be held Aug. 25-27 in Tokyo

### Yasukuni

Bill to nationalize Yasukuni Shrine dies in Cabinet committee as Diet session  
end (Shimpo 5/16, News Letter 5/20)  
Special committee on Yasukuni Problem appeals to all churches to study problems  
and prepare for next struggle (Shimpo 5/23)

### TUTS

A special committee of seven persons is named by Tokyo Union Theological Seminary  
Board of Trustees' Chairman Isamu Omura to study Seminary problem (Shimpo 5/23)  
The TUTS Joint Struggle Committee (student group critical of TUTS) has published  
a 132-page report on its struggle (Shimpo 5/23)

### Evangelism

Consultation on pioneer evangelism...see "Coming"

### Youth

Leaders of church high school student camps meet May 4-6 in Shizuoka (Shimpo 5/23)

### Education

Nobuyuki Tajima, Aoyama Gakuin, is named chairman of Committee on Education  
(Shimpo, 5/2)  
Heads of church kindergartens to meet...see "Coming"

### Overseas

Moderator Kiyoshi Ii, Shiro Abe, Kazuyo Kishimoto, Koko Shishida, Wallace Brown  
attend United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis and other meetings  
(Shimpo 5/9)  
Rev. Nicholas Iyoya of the Joint Strategy and Action Commission of North California  
churches reports on his visit in Japan (Shimpo 5/2, News Letter 5/20)

### Ministry

Committee on Ministerial Training and Qualifications announces qualifying  
examinations for licensed preachers and ordained ministers will be given  
Oct. 13-15 (Shimpo 5/16)  
Kansai Rural Center meeting for pastors' wives...see "Coming"  
Texts of lectures given at National Pastors' Conference, Sept, 1969, given in  
Shimpo supplement (Shimpo 5/23)  
Kyodan-related seminary graduates total 33, compared with 49 in 1969, 112 in 1968

### Executive

Committee on Revision of Kyodan Constitution begins collecting materials and  
opinions on revision of Article 9 regarding pastors' orders. Kikaku Shimamura  
is elected chairman (Shimpo 4/25, News Letter 5/20)  
Kyodan Standing Executive Committee met May 11  
District assemblies being held during April, May and June  
Rev. Shigehide Sakurai, Sendai Hirose Kahan Church, is elected to the Standing  
Committee (Shimpo 4/25)  
"Association to promote normalization of the Kyodan" meets May 1 in Tokyo,  
organizes Kanto branch; 60 persons attend (Shimpo 5/16)